The appendice

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Political fiction about Quebec separating from Canada

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Â Â The scene is the offices of a lawyer in Beauceville, province of QuÃ©bec, Canada.On a chair facing Me Rocquebruneâ s massive desk, Arthur Taitu, a rich farmer,is sitting quietly, waiting for his solicitor to finish reading to him from a petitionÂ that he is expected to sign later. Taitu is a little man with a decided temperament.One look at him is enough to know that one is facing an individual of aÂ determinate disposition and that once started, any business with him will have toÂ go his way or else. But right now, Arthur Taitu is not so sure. Why, he thinks thatÂ he is way over his head with this project that he has started at great cost and hasÂ him one Wednesday morning listening to his solicitor mumbling silly legalese toÂ his quite incomprehensible ears.

Â Â And he doesnâ t like the feeling that much. The last time he was here, in this sameÂ room, was six years before when he had sued AmÃ©dÃ© Trudel over farmÂ machinery material that had made his life miserable ever after buying the heavy-Â weight equipment. Then, he finds himself looking around, seeing on the wallsÂ that surround him all those pictures of Me Rocquebrune smiling at or shakingÂ hands with local dubious celebrities. Who are these people, he asks himself, notÂ at all impressed by the display that makes the place look like some KiwanisÂ president headquarters. Anyway, there is in the monotonous voice of his solicitorÂ an air of quiet authority, the words he uses look erudite and scholarly and the factÂ that he canâ t make head nor tail out of the incoherent paragraphs reassuresÂ Arthur in the end. After all, it is the way it should be. How could these men of lawÂ win cases if they were to talk in a lingo that any Joe Blow like himself couldÂ decipher? And then, something in the lawyerâ s voice stopped his reverie. AfterÂ more â Whereasâ that Arthur had cared to count, now Me Rocquebrune is startingÂ to make sense and then, what he gets is his clientâ s full attention.

Â Â The story Arthur is now hearing goes this way:

Â Â September 4, 2012, the Parti QuÃ©bÃ©cois had won the Quebec elections, gainingÂ for themselves a majority government of 70 out of 125. It had been a severeÂ defeat for Jean Charest, premier for the last nine years and his Parti Liberal. TheÂ PLQÂ was left with 21 deputies in the new parliament, in third place after LaÂ Coalition pour lâ Avenir du QuÃ©bec, a new formation created by PQ renegadeÂ FranÃ§ois Legault who had managed to get 43 of his kind elected with 32% of theÂ popular vote.

Â Â Against PQâ s 38% and PLQ 20%.

Â Â For the first time in history, there was in QuÃ©bec a woman Premier. It was indeedÂ for Pauline Marois a great personal victory even if her party had been taken overÂ lately by radicals who had forced upon her the RIP, (RÃ©fÃ©rendum dâ InitiativePopulaire). Everybody knew in Quebec that the issue of the separation ofÂ Quebec from Canada wasnâ t that popular after two lost consultations in 1980 andÂ 1995 and that any new one would be lost without a doubt. But those facts werenot about to deter the zealots in the party from forcing a new one on theÂ population however divisive it could be. Hence the RIP that made it possible forÂ 15% of the registered voters to petition their way to one new referendum. It wasÂ expected that the radicals in the PQ would not leave power without putting thatÂ issue another time in front of the people, either with Maroisâ full consent orÂ without her benediction via the RIP.

Â Â And then, lawyer Rocquebruneâ s petition brings the action back in earlyÂ 2013. Minister Pierre Duchesne is in his office in the Parliament house inÂ Quebec. On his desk is a map of the province that he is now showing to hisÂ colleague Jean-FranÃ§ois LisÃ©e. Duchesne is a little uncomfortable. He is notÂ sure what to expect. This idea of his, he entertained for a long time but never expressed it to anybody else for fear of the way it will be received. Because theÂ concept he is about to expose to LisÃ©e is quite shocking and he knows that mostÂ will see as indecent, frightful or horrendous. And still, if they want to win thisÂ thingâ ¦ because, he knows. He knows that if they do what he is now going toÂ propose, his side will win the next referendum. There can be no discussion aboutÂ that. He is so much certain of the matter that it is not even open for discussion.

Â Â The thing is self evident. You do what he proposes and the expected result will come. The word chemistry pops out in his head. CHEMISTRY!

Â Â Thatâ s it! Chemistry! This is just chemistry, he thinks.

Â Â Duchesne is now ready for LisÃ©e.

- â You see this?â He asked.

- â Well, yes. It is a map. What about it?â

- â You take a good look at that little triangle there, this little piece of land withÂ rivers on both sides and the Ontario borders at its west flank?â

- â I think it is called the Beauharnois district.â Says LisÃ©e.

- â And then, you add up the western part of the Island of Montreal.â

- â So what?â

- â You know how many anglos live in that area.â

- â To many.â

Â Â That gets LisÃ©e the expected laugh.

- â 920,000 as a matter of fact.â

Â Â LisÃ©e shrugs his shoulders.

- â Tell me something I donâ t know.â

- â Plus 300,000 or so of allophones, I mean people who may speak French but

use English in their day to day life.â

- â Out of a population of how many, the total living in that zone of yours, if I may ask.â

- â One million and a half.â

- â So that leaves 300,000 people of our kind living there.â

- â And not many of them we can expect to answer YES to the right question, ifÂ you care to have my take on that subject.â

- â I would tend to agree with you on this one.â

- â What ifâ ¦â The other stops, why, is he afraid? They are just talking after all. NoÂ harm done.

Â Â And LisÃ©e, for his part, is interested. Duchesne can see that. There are in hisÂ eyes some sparkle of intelligent speculation. The guy is smart. Nobody, friends orÂ foes, will dispute much or long over that issue.Â And now, without being told, LisÃ©e can see by himself where this demonstrationÂ is leading. Well. How come he never up to this minute considered the notionÂ himself? He looks at the map. Which is so big that it takes more space thanÂ Duchesneâ s desk provide.

Â Â All of it, QuÃ©bec.

Â Â And, in the lower center of it all, this small red dot, drawn with a marker, thanksÂ to his friendâ s artistic skills, no bigger than one of his shirt button. A piece soÂ small that it couldnâ t make any geographical difference and still, a morsel thatÂ could be the answer to their dreams of creating a country for themselves inÂ America.

- â What if ?â Duchesne repeats, and then, he sees the half smile on LisÃ©eâ s faceÂ and knows that he has a sell.

- â You want to get rid of the lot, isnâ t it?â LisÃ©e asks.

- â We lost the last one because of them.â

- â The old man had it right, isnâ t it?â LisÃ©e is referring to premier JacquesÂ Parizeau in 1995 who had said, the night of the crushing defeat of the yes vote atÂ 49.42%:

â We have been beaten by money andâ ¦ the ethnic vote.â

- â I would say, good riddance, donâ t you?â

- â How big is that area, anyway?â

- â 3000 square miles, I think. Look at it. 60 by 50 at the most. No even thatÂ much.â

- â One tiny appendix.â

- â Nicely put,â Duchesne agrees.

- â I say. It could be done.â

- â Damn right you are.â

- â It would take care easy of one million and a half NO votes, thatâ s for sure.â

- â And except for those lousy 3000 square miles, whatâ s left of Quebec would beÂ Â French alright, not to be bothered anymore about minority rights. That would bethe day, donâ t you think?â

- â What about Montreal?â LisÃ©e asks at that point.

- â The west part of it starts at the boulevard St-Laurent. So, there will be EnglishÂ Montreal and French Montreal.â

- â There goes downtown Montreal.â

- â We will build ourselves a bigger one.â

- â This may be a tough sell for some.â

- â Never like the damn place, anyway.â Concluded Duchesne.

Â Â And so it was. Arthur Taitu remembered the events past that were now part of hisÂ lawyerâ s narrative. The PQ had initiated talks with Harper conservative Canadaâ sÂ government and it had been decided that if the people of the province of QuebecÂ were to agree by referendum to the partition of their territory, so be it. BothÂ governments had then voted one constitutional amendment that created oneÂ federal territory in the area known as the QuÃ©bec western peninsula which hadÂ been permitted by successful referendums held in both QuÃ©bec and the so calledÂ â appendiceâ .

Â Â Later, in 2014, there had been a new referendum where the then actualÂ population of QuÃ©bec, six and a half million inhabitants, were invited to decide ifÂ they wanted to stay in Canada or not. Those mostly French citizens had decidedÂ 61% in favour of secession. Arthur Taitu was part of the 39% of the very angryÂ French Canadians that felt betrayed and abandoned by their FederalÂ Government.

Â Â Which explained why Taitu, who was up to now a perfect nobody, (but wouldÂ soon be no more, thanks to Me Rocquebrune efforts) had initiated this petitionÂ against those politicians he had hated all his life, those of the pÃ©quiste varietyÂ and who had, in some kind of machiavellian plot, done the unthinkable and inÂ doing so, were about to win the game. This couldnâ t be. This was too much. He,Â Arthur Taitu, being left with all the idiotic and witless characters that were, theseÂ days, crying out loud all their crazy schemes to reconstruct the province their wayÂ and to him, it looked definitely like the course of a mob into the direction of aÂ bottomless pit made out of leftist political lunacy.

Â Â Now, would Me Rocquebrune be able to pull this off? For sure, his lawyer lookedÂ the part. He had the learned and reassuring allure of the intellectual species asÂ Taitu imagined the lot should look. Didnâ t mean anything. Taitu who hadnâ t read

anything in his life except the Almanach and the baseball book of records. ButÂ Rocquebrune knew his way around and he had obtained the collaboration of oneÂ constitutional professor from McGill University. So he must have had hisÂ conclusions right as he was now reciting them, Chinese to Arthurâ s ears.

Â Â There was a lot of â quash left and rightâ and â annul here and thereâ and â declareÂ null and void this and thatâ . But when all was said and done, Arthur Taitu hadÂ been told that what he was asking the court to do was to tell them all politiciansÂ to f..k themselves with their dirty shenanigans. To take their little laws andÂ shove them up their asses. And to leave him in peace. Yup. Leave him in peace.Â In the Canada he liked and who had, up to now, protected him, his property andÂ his animals from the thieving separatists.

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